

Congressman Jack Bergman, Michigan's First Congressional District

Chair Kaptur, Ranking Member Simpson, and Members of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here speaking to you in support of construction of the new lock at the Soo Locks complex located in Sault Ste Marie, Michigan, in my district. I also want to take a moment and thank the Committee for its work up to this point in support of this project.

For those of you who may not be familiar with this project, the Soo Locks system serves a critical transportation need, not just for the Great Lakes region, but for our country. The Soo Locks connect Lake Superior with the other Great Lakes and, ultimately, with the rest of our country – making it a critical waterway and necessary access point for our nation's manufacturing and commercial industries. Currently, the Poe Lock, the largest of the Locks, is a single point of failure in a system that supports millions of jobs throughout the supply chain and generates over one trillion dollars in economic activity. Congress identified the clear need for modernization of the Soo Locks when it initially authorized the construction of a new lock in 1986, 2007, and again in 2018, when this project was last reauthorized.

A 2015 Department of Homeland Security report articulated the threat to the U.S. and global economy of an unscheduled outage of the Poe Lock, highlighting the need for redundancy and modernization at the Soo Locks. Any disruption of the Poe Lock would likely shut down steel production in the Great Lakes, and consequently bring North American appliances, automobile, construction equipment, farm equipment, mining equipment, and railcar production to a halt. This would have devastating economic implications for not only the Great Lakes region, but also to the greater North American economy.

Ensuring this new lock gets built has truly been a bipartisan endeavor, and the work already underway is a testament to that fact. Funding to date has been utilized for design, contract procurement, and construction of the upstream channel deepening, design and contract procurement for the upstream approach walls, and continued design of the new lock chamber, with on- site construction having begun in 2020. However, the Army Corps is not immune to many of the issues facing the rest of the country right now: costs for everything from labor to equipment have gone up. And adding to that, unfortunately, are miscalculations in the metrics used within the original cost estimate, which are now being worked out by the Army Corps. Ultimately, this combination of factors has led to an increase cost estimate for this critical project.

That is why I am here today asking the committee to make increased investments in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Construction Account, where projects like the new lock construction at the Soo Locks can compete for funding. This project has received widespread, bipartisan support in the House, Senate, and across multiple administrations, which is how we've gotten this far. And I urge the subcommittee to maintain this momentum by adequately funding the construction account, so that the Army Corps has the resources it needs for the new lock when creating its FY23 workplan. I will also note that last month I sent a letter, cosigned by 25 of my House colleagues, to this subcommittee urging continued support of the project and additional funding for the Army Corps Construction account, which I believe demonstrates the continued support across Congressional districts.

The Soo Locks are an integral component of the Great Lakes Navigation System. As unique, critical infrastructure, building the new lock at the Soo is not only significant for my district, or for the state of Michigan, but it's truly an area of national importance. Again, I thank

the subcommittee for its interest in this project and for allowing me to testify. I look forward to working with you all to keep the momentum going.

Thank you,

Jack Bergman
Member of Congress